

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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O P 141520Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9229
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4703

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR MILI LE IS
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: TWICE AROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR STRIKES OUT WITH CAMILLE CHAMOUN, WHO IN HIGHLY EMOTIONAL STATE ABOUT SYRIANS. BOUTROS AND SARKIS CONTINUE TO BE INTERESTED IN MOVING ARMY TO SOUTH BUT ARE NOT GOING TO DO SO UNLESS THEY HAVE SOME ASSURANCES IT WILL NOT BE BOMBARDED AS SOON AS IT ARRIVES.

2. GIVEN DANY CHAMOUN'S REMARKS YESTERDAY TO EFFECT HIS FATHER WAS ONLY AUTHORIZED SPOKESMAN FOR PNL AND GIVEN FACT I HAD NOT SEEN HIM FOR SOME TIME, I CALLED ON CAMILLE CHAMOUN AT HIS APARTMENT IN ASHRAFIEH THIS MORNING. KINSOLVING ACCOMPANIED. WE FOUND CHAMOUN'S BUILDING FORTIFIED WITH CINDER BLOCK BARRICADE AND WITH ALL SORTS OF ARMED MEN SWARMING AROUND. CHAMOUN IS NOW INSTALLED ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE BUILDING AS OPPOSED TO FORMER LOCATION ON FIFTH, AND GENERAL ATMOSPHERE WAS THAT OF A DUGOUT ON THE SIEGFRIED

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LINE.

3. I TOLD CHAMOUN THAT I HAD HAD A VERY INTERESTING CONVERSATION WITH HIS SON DANY THE DAY BEFORE AND HAD DECIDED I SHOULD COME SEE HIM TO MAKE OUR POSITION CLEAR. IN BRIEF, WE WERE VERY ENCOURAGED BY THE PRESENT CEASE-FIRE AND HOPED IT WOULD BE PARLAYED INTO SOMETHING MORE COMPRE-

HENSIVE. THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN OUR VIEW WAS RESTRAINT ON PART OF ALL PARTIES. THE SYRIANS WERE NOT GOING TO PULL BACK UNDER FIRE. IT WAS IN CHRISTIAN INTEREST TO STOP SNIPING AT THEM. I SAID WE ALSO WERE INTERESTED IN STATIONING OF LEBANESE UNIT IN SOUTH LEBANON. ISRAELIS HAD GIVEN THEIR AGREEMENT, BUT THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS POSED A PROBLEM. I HOPED THAT PERHAPS THESE ATTITUDES COULD BE MODIFIED.

4. CHAMOUN HEARD ME OUT AND THEN GAVE ME HALF HOUR LECTURE ABOUT AMERICA ABANDONING CHRISTIANS TO BE MASSACRED BY SYRIANS. WHAT APPARENTLY SET HIM OFF WAS A NEWSWEEK ARTICLE IN TODAY'S PRESS REPORTING AMERICAN PRESSURE ON ISRAELIS NOT TO SEND ARMS TO CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. HE ASKED IF THIS WAS TRUE. I SAID OUR POLICY WAS CLEAR. WE THOUGHT THE FEWER WEAPONS AROUND BEIRUT, THE BETTER. WE HAD ADVISED THE ISRAELIS NOT TO SEND HEAVY WEAPONS TO THE MILITIAS BECAUSE WE THOUGHT THAT WOULD SIMPLY ENCOURAGE THE EXTREMISTS.

5. CHAMOUN SAID WE SAW ONLY THE SYRIAN SIDE OF THE EQUATION. WE OVERLOOKED SYRIAN EFFORTS TO DOMINATE LEBANON AND THE PROVOCATIONS THE SYRIANS HAD DEALT THE CHRISTIANS. THE ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT OF JULY 1 WAS UNPROVOKED. THE SYRIANS WERE TRYING TO DESTROY CHRISTIAN LEBANON. AMERICA WOULD NOT COME TO THE AID OF THE CHRISTIANS,
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AND THE CHRISTIANS MIGHT THEREFORE BE DOOMED TO DIE, BUT THEY WERE PREPARED TO FIGHT FOR THEIR LIBERTY. HE HAD DECIDED TO DIE HIMSELF AND DID NOT CARE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS. I SAID HE SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE A CARE ABOUT HIS SONS AND THEIR FAMILIES AND THAT WAR WITH SYRIANS WAS GOING TO BE VERY COSTLY TO THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

6. AFTER ABOUT 45 MINUTES OF THIS EXCHANGE I CONCLUDED THERE WAS NOTHING FURTHER TO BE GAINED AND WE LEFT. THE PRESS WAS WAITING OUTSIDE AND GOD KNOWS WHAT DECLARATION CHAMOUN HAS MADE TO THEM. WE WILL READ ABOUT IT TOMORROW.

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
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EXDIS

7. WE THEN WENT UP TO BAABDA WHERE WE MET WITH SRAKIS AND BOUTROS FOR ABOUT 45 MINUTES. I GAVE TO THEM A PIECE OF PAPER SUMMARIZING POINTS IN PARA. 4 OF TEL AVIV'S 10332, DESCRIBING EXCHANGE BETWEEN LEWIS ON ONE HAND AND EYTAN AND WEIZMAN ON THE OTHER. BOUTROS READ IT AND ASKED IN WHAT RESPECT IF DIFFERED FROM WHAT WE HAD ALREADY TOLD HIM ABOUT EXCHANGES WITH ISRAELIS. I SAID FOR ONE THING IT WAS THE CLEAREST AND MOST EXPLICIT ISRAELI STATEMENT WE HAD HAD. FOR ANOTHER, BOTH WEIZMAN AND EYTAN HAD BEEN PRESENT AND HAD CONCURRED. SINCE THESE TWO WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE DIVERGENT VIEWS, THIS WAS SIGNIFICANT. BOUTROS SAID THIS WAS ALL VERY WELL, BUT NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. WHAT ASSURANCES COULD WE GIVE THEM ABOUT THE MILITIAS?

8. I THEN READ HIM THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF TEL AVIV'S 10339 AND SAID THAT NOBODY COULD GIVE THEM ANY GUARANTEES, BUT THAT ISRAELIS WERE COMMITTED TO MAKING AN EFFORT TO RESTRAIN THE MILITIAS. THERE WERE OBVIOUSLY CERTAIN RISKS
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INVOLVED IF THEY MOVED TROOPS TO THE SOUTH. THIS WAS IN THE NATURE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS. OUR AMBASSADOR IN TEL AVIV THOUGHT THOSE RISKS WERE ACCEPTABLE, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE FACT THE LEBANESE WOULD BE SURROUNDED BY UNIFIL.

9. BOUTROS SAID GENERAL KHOURY HAD RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM UNIFIL INDICATING THEY WERE THINKING IN TERMS OF MOVING A BATTALION TO SOME PLACE OTHER THAN TIBNIN BECAUSE THE LATTER WAS TOO EXPOSED TO FIRE FROM THE CHRISTIANS. CUQ WAS COMING UP ON WEDNESDAY TO TALK TO KHOURY ABOUT THIS. (COMMENT: WE

ALSO EXPECT ERSKINE HERE WEDNESDAY 16TH. END COMMENT) HE
THOUGHT COL WOULD HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THAT MEETING TOOK PLACE
BEFORE MAKING ANY DECISIONS. I SAID THAT SEEMED REASONABLE.

10. BOUTROS THEN ASKED WHAT GUARANTEES WE COULD GIVE
NEITHER ISRAELIS OR CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WOULD FIRE ON
TROOPS AT KAWKABA. I SAID THERE WERE NO GUARANTEES
OF ANYTHING, BUT WE FELT ISRAELIS UNDERSTOOD IMPORTANCE
OF RESTRAINT IN THIS RESPECT. I THEN READ HIM THIRD
AND FOURTH SENTENCES OF PARA 3 TEL AVIV'S 10339. HE
SAID THAT WAS NOT VERY EXPLICIT AND I SAID THAT THERE
WAS ANOTHER TELEGRAM (TEL AVIV'S 10332) WHICH HAD BEEN
A LITTLE MORE SPECIFIC ON QUESTION BUT I DID NOT HAVE IT
WITH ME AND WOULD HAVE TO CALL BACK. I AM PLANNING TO CALL
HIM AND READ HIM LAST TWO SENTENCES OF PARA 9 OF TEL AVIV'S
10332. IT WILL NOT SATISFY HIM, BUT IT SEEMS TO BE ALL WE
HAVE.

11. WE DISCUSSED QUESTION OF ROUTE, USE OF HELICOPTERS ETC.
AND DECIDED THIS WOULD ALL HAVE TO AWAIT THE CUQ-HOURY
CONVERSATION ON WEDNESDAY. BOUTROS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE
ATTITUDE OF THE MILITIAS WAS OF MAJOR CONCERN TO LEBANESE
AND THAT THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHY, IF THE ISRAELIS COULD
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RESTRAIN HADDAD FROM FIRING AT KAWKABA, THEY COULD NOT
RESTRAIN ZAATER FROM FIRING AT TIBNIN.

12. COMMENT. I HAVE STRUCK OUT WITH CHAMOUN. I AM
NEVERTHELESS GOING TO TRY WITH SHEIKH PIERRE GEMAYEL TOO,
AND PERHAPS BASHIR AS WELL, ON WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY, BUT
I FRANKLY HAVE HAD AS MUCH OF THE MARONITE LEADERS AS I
CAN STOMACH. I DO NOT THINK THERE IS ANY PRACTICAL
POSSIBILITY OF GETTING THEM TO HELP WITH THE MOVE
OF THE ARMY TO THE SOUTH UNLESS WE GET THE SYRIANS OUT OF
BEIRUT. THAT IS THEIR PRICE. WE WILL EITHER HAVE TO
MEET IT OR HAVE TO OPERATE WITHOUT THEM. THE LEBANESE
GOVERNMENT ITSELF, I.E., SARKIS AND BOUTROS, HAS GIVEN
UP ON THEM. I SPECIFICALLY ASKED SARKIS IF THEY
COULD NOT TRY TO WORK ON BASHIR AND CAMILLE AND HE SAID,
NO, IT WAS USELESS.

13. THERE IS, HOWEVER, CONTINUING INTEREST IN MOVING
THE ARMY SOUTH. BOUTROS SAID THAT MOVING VIA QA'QAIYYA
OR COASTAL ROUTE IN GENERAL WOULD REQUIRE NEGOTIATING
AGREEMENT WITH BOTH SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS. BEFORE
THEY UNDERTOOK THAT THERE HAD TO BE SOME ASSURANCES
TROOPS WERE NOT GOING TO BE BOMBARDED ONCE THEY ARRIVED.
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